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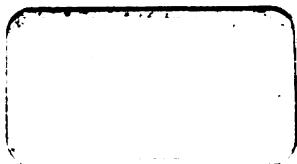
Kimber. Letter in answer to A False
Position Exposed. 1822

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A LETTER

TO

A FRIEND IN NEW-YORK.

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THE Author is alone accountable for the sentiments contained in the following Letter. He is not in membership with the Society of Friends, nor in unity with them in any thing out of the limits and government of the Truth itself: in which there is no self-seeking, no human contrivance, no exaltation of worldly-minded men in the church, but God is all in all.

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A LETTER

TO

A FRIEND IN NEW-YORK,

IN ANSWER TO A LATE ANONYMOUS PUBLICATION,

ENTITLED

A FALSE POSITION EXPOSED.

BY EMMOR KIMBER.

PHILADELPHIA:

PUBLISHED BY E. LITTELL, FOR THE AUTHOR.

1822.

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Eastern District of Pennsylvania, to wit:

BE IT REMEMBERED, That on the twenty-fifth day of October, in the forty-seventh year of the Independence of the United States of America, A. D. 1823, Emmor Kimber, of the said District, hath deposited in this office the title of a book, the right whereof he claims as author, in the words following, to wit:

"A letter to a Friend in New-York, in answer to a late anonymous publication, entitled, a False Position Exposed. By Emmor Kimber."

In conformity to the act of the Congress of the United States, intitled "An act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts, and books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned."—And also to the act, entitled "An act supplementary to an act, entitled 'An act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts, and books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies during the times therein mentioned,' and extending the benefits thereof to the arts of designing, engraving, and etching historical and other prints."

D. CALDWELL,
Clerk of the Eastern District of Pennsylvania.

Kimberton, Chester Co. Penn.

TO ***** ****.

RESPECTED FRIEND,

I HAVE perused a pamphlet, entitled "*A False Position Exposed,*" which appears to have been written by a Friend who seems solicitous to effect his purpose in disguise; for he has assumed, or very awkwardly attempted to assume, the style and language of others. From the channel through which it comes, I understand also, that it is the production of a Friend residing within the limits of New York Yearly Meeting. As he has not chosen to let us know to whom we are so much obliged, and as he has taken a great deal of pains to convince our judgment, and make us comprehend *that we ought to believe what we cannot understand*, I wish, through this address to thee, to reach the author with some views upon the subject, and such remarks upon his Exposition, as may be worthy his attention.

I am one of those "certain individuals" that the author has denounced; having never believed any thing that I did not understand at the time. If our author is really serious in condemning this,

and substituting a plan of blind and implicit belief, then ought he to have been the last man to reject any doctrine because he could not understand it—If he can believe any one abstract proposition, statement, or testimony, without understanding it, then why not another? Or, when he once begins to believe without understanding, where can he draw a line? Where can he consistently make a stand?

I suspect, however, that our author is not so much unlike “the certain individuals” that have disturbed him, as he affects to think himself. His very Exposition is an *effort to examine*;—he is not satisfied because he cannot understand, and gives up the matter almost upon the first onset, when he says, page 4, “It is extremely desirable “that every person should use his own understanding, and not implicitly take any thing for “granted, as being wise and true, merely because “another person may dogmatically and roundly “assert it to be so.” If he had had the courage to believe what he appears to have understood at that moment,—if he had not been frightened at names, and consequences that he apprehended would follow,—if it had not been for the *pious intention* of putting down these “certain individuals,” and discrediting their testimonies for the sake of the *peace and unity of the society*, he would

have thrown aside his pen, exercised his *own understanding*, and allowed other men the same privilege. But, alas, the "Unitarian creed" was right ahead; "Socinus, Hume, Thomas Paine, "and the French Atheists," all stared him in the face, and he determined to *expose* the False Position, and convince us that we must either believe what we cannot comprehend, or, to use his own words, "believe nothing at all; nothing of what "you see, nothing of what is within you: believe "not your very existence, and, to complete your "Unitarian creed, believe not the very existence "of the God who made you; for of all this you "understand nothing!" page 4 and 5.

I have seldom in my life met with such absurdity and nonsense; and if men will write and publish such jargon, they may be excused for insisting upon our belief without understanding—for, to every reader who must understand before he can believe, our author, being unintelligible, would write in vain.

The author then proceeds to catechise a "certain individual." He puts the questions, and answers them himself to suit his own purpose; draws his own conclusions, and lands him in great absurdity; pushes him before him until he makes a Deist of him, and finally an Atheist! and all be-

cause his "certain individual" cannot believe without understanding what he is to believe.

I would pass by his examination of the "certain individual" in natural things, without a remark, if he had treated him fairly;—but as he is represented as utterly lost in a maze, and overwhelmed with the weight of evidence; as he is made to appear dumb before our author and astonished with the radiance of his wisdom, I will try to extricate him, that I may have his company in the sequel;—for he is a man of understanding, a reasonable creature, a humble and devoted Christian, and a faithful servant of God.

If he had been allowed to answer for himself, when he was asked, page 5, "Is it very intelligible to your reason, how the world, being not as yet in existence, and being as yet nothing, both as to matter and to form; how, I say, the world issued out of nothing into existence, at the very first nod of its Omnipotent Maker?" He would have said, No. It is not intelligible to my reason, nor is there any necessity that it should be. It is a subject that has never been revealed to me: all secret things belong to God, with whom I leave this, and would advise thee to rest it also. Every idea thou can have in thy own wisdom, about "the *world*, being not as yet in existence, and being as yet nothing, both as to matter and

"to form," must be speculative and vain—leave such unprofitable investigation. It is surely enough for thee and me to know that God is omnipotent; to create a world, or ten thousand worlds, is equally easy and possible with Him.—His next question is—

"Do you conceive *how* in one instant, and by one act of his divine will, God made the Heavens, the earth, the seas, with all that they contain?" p. 5.

"*Certain Individual.*" I do not: I think such a question irreverent. It belongs to God alone to conceive *how* he effected the creation.

Author. "You conceive not how the world exists; let us see now if you have a better conception of the laws by which it is governed. What are those beams that enlighten us?" page 6.

"*Certain Individual.*" They are sun beams.

Author. "What that air which we breathe?"

"*Certain Individual.*" Atmospheric air.

Author. "What the earth that supports us?"

"*Certain Individual.*" The world, one of the planets.

Author. "What is that drop of water?"

"*Certain Individual.*" A drop of water.

Author. "Tell me, what is that drop of water? that grain of sand? that blade of grass? Make me comprehend, if you can, its intrinsic nature,

"and all its properties ; enable me to say, I comprehend this drop of water, this grain of sand, this 'slender herb ?' " page 7.

" *Certain Individual.*" I really cannot : I have no desire to examine theories on such subjects, much less any wish to make thee comprehend a drop of water, a grain of sand, or a blade of grass. We have the evidence of our senses that they exist ;—we can have the same evidence of their component parts, and properties. We can therefore believe they exist, that they are so composed and have these properties—we can also readily believe *they may have* properties that we ~~know~~ nothing about at present, and if these should ever be discovered and explained to our understandings, we can then believe further concerning them.

The author proceeds in this manner to examine his " *Certain Individual,*" to convince him of his ignorance, to alarm him at the consequence, and then launches him into "downright atheism," because he cannot comprehend God !

To examine the steps by which he has arrived at this imposing conclusion, would be to copy out his book, protest against every unfair inference, and repeat the only proper answer to his impious questions, Let them alone ; thou art meddling with secret things that belong to God ; keep with-

in the bounds of reason and revelation; for "things" only "that are revealed belong to us" "and to our children." Deut. xxix. 29. No matter through what medium, whether through faith simply, or through the agency of the spirit of a man*—if they are revealed to us, we can understand them; and we may then be made the instruments in revealing what we have understood through this means, to other men.

We see the grass grows; we have the evidence of our senses that there is a great variety of plants that grow out of the earth. We can understand, and therefore believe, that the grass grows, that there exists this variety of plants, &c. But as to comprehending *how* the growth is effected,—*how* the variety can take place in the same soil, are things about which we believe nothing; because, we cannot understand the operation of those causes that are secret, and belong to God alone.

These remarks will apply with equal correctness to every other thing in the creation, the existence of which can be tested by the evidence of our senses: the study of nature, and the operations of the laws of nature, that lie open to our view and invite examination, is an employment that becomes a rational and intelligent being, and

* There is a spirit in man; and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding. Job, xxxii. 8.

under circumstances, may be proper and commendable, though extended from "the cedar that is in Lebanon, even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall," or should lead us to describe, or speak "of beasts, and of fowls, and of creeping things, and of fishes." 1 Kings, iv. 33.

Whatever these researches may enable us to understand, we can believe respecting the works of nature; and whatever is beyond our comprehension we will leave to the author of the Exposition, who professes to believe without understanding what he believes!

But to leave the works of creation, let us "look through nature, up to Nature's God." It is with feelings of reverence that I use his name, and with regard to his honour!

Our author says, "Is there any thing more unintelligible, more incomprehensible, more above all created understanding, than God? Is not incomprehensibility the most prominent attribute, not only of God himself, but also of all his works? Can the Unitarian comprehend a Being that has neither beginning nor end, and that lives throughout all eternity?" page 11-12.

If our author had lived among the Athenians, in the days of the apostle, he would probably have been (if indeed he is not at present) a communicant at the altar inscribed "To the unknown

God." And I am not certain he would not have been ready to denounce the apostle as a Unitarian, or perhaps a deist, for attempting to declare him.

"Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things
 "ye are too superstitious.* For as I passed by,
 "and beheld your devotion, I found an altar with
 "this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom
 "therefore ye *ignorantly* worship, him declare I
 "unto you. God that made the world, and all
 "things therein, seeing that he is Lord of Heaven
 "and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with
 "hands, neither is worshipped with men's hands,
 "as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth
 "to all life and breath, and all things : and hath
 "made of one blood all nations of men for to
 "dwell on the face of the earth, and hath deter-
 "mined the times before appointed, and the bounds
 "of their habitation ; that they should seek the
 "Lord, if happily they might feel after him, and
 "find him, though he be not far from every one
 "of us ; for in him *we live, and move, and have*
 "*our being.*"

Whatever our author may think, it does not appear that the apostle could either inculcate or commend *ignorance* of God. It is certainly the most deplorable, the most fatal ignorance, and can only take place in minds that are under the

* Superstition, false religion, false worship. See Johnson.

old dispensation, the old covenant. For, in the new covenant, the dispensation of Christ, ignorance of God cannot exist; for "I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour and every man his brother, saying, know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord." Jeremiah, xxxi. 33, 34.

But we have other testimony, to prove that God is not that "unintelligible" Being which our author has represented him to be:—we have the testimony of Christ himself—

"If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." John, xiv. 23. The good man is not a stranger to God, and God is not a stranger to him:—he knows him, and therefore believes in him, has communion with him, and all his "steps are ordered by the Lord." Psalms, xxxvii. 23.

"If ye had known me, ye should have known my father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him." John xiv. 7.

"That which may be known of God is manifest in man: for God hath showed it unto them." Rom. i. 19.

"And this is life eternal, that they might know

"*Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.*" John, xvii. 3.

A firm belief, therefore, in God, is most consistent with reason, revelation, and experience; and unbelief in him, in the mind of a wise, intelligent, and rational creature, who believes what he can understand, cannot exist. It is the *fool* that has said in his heart there is no God—and if even a fool *can believe* there is no God, he must arrive at the "horrid conclusion" from accustoming himself to believe without understanding or comprehending his subject.

It is very evident that the design of our author is to stigmatize his "Certain Individuals" with the doctrine of Unitarianism, and by the names "Socinus, Hume, Thomas Paine, and the French atheists," to excite prejudice and throw an odium upon their characters. To say the least, such secret and covert attacks are unkind, cruel, and unchristian.

Why not come out at once; give his name, and the name of his "Certain Individuals?" He ought to do so at the risk of his right of membership with Friends, or act consistently with the Discipline of the Society, in subjecting his essay to the constituted authority to suppress or sanction.

The Unitarian creed I have never seen. The

writings of the authors he has mentioned I have never read, except Hume's History of England; I have been accustomed for many years to read the Scriptures daily; and what is more, to reflect, to "commune with my heart;" to wait for a capacity to understand and to comprehend, so as to judge what is right;* and I can unite with our author in this one thing, that "It is extremely desirable that every person should use his own understanding, and not implicitly take any thing for granted, as being wise and true, merely because another person may dogmatically and roundly assert it to be so." p. 4. I hold, that we cannot *believe* without the aid of the understanding: people may *think* they believe, may talk of mysteries and miracles; may become blind zealots, or cruel bigots through this means, but they will be ignorant of themselves, ignorant of God, and strangers to the benign and heavenly doctrines of the Gospel.

What man of serious reflection, that has been accustomed to judge in himself what is right, was ever startled with unbelief at the testimony of the evangelist, that Adam, our common parent, was the son of God? Luke, iii. 38. He was a production of his own Almighty power, a part of

* "Yea, and why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?" LUKE, xii. 57.

the creation of God, made in his own image, and constituted a living soul.

The second Adam was also a production of the same Almighty power, and is emphatically, and most truly called the Son of God. Miracles and mysteries aside, what man of sober reflection can at all be at a loss to understand and believe the simple testimonies of the Scriptures in the case? With God all things are possible:—to create the world, to make Adam out of the dust of the ground, and to cause a virgin to bring forth the man Christ Jesus are equally possible, easily understood, and therefore readily and firmly believed by every humble Christian.

“And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.” Luke, ii. 52.

“And the child grew and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his showing unto Israel.” Luke, i. 80.

In all which there is nothing hard to be understood—nor nothing about which “Certain Individuals” would have been denounced as deists and atheists, if it had not been for cunningly devised fables, the decrees of councils, and the doctrines of men.

But the man Christ Jesus, the second Adam, the Son of God, though arrived at the age of maturity, for he “began to be about thirty years of

"age," Luke, iii. 22. did not enter upon his ministry, the great work which the Father had sent him to perform, "until he was endued with power from on high." Luke, xxiv. 49. "The heaven was opened, and the Holy Ghost" (that is, the Holy Spirit, that is, God,) "descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him; and a voice came from Heaven, which said, thou art my beloved son, in thee I am well pleased." Luke, iii. 21, 22.

That "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself," 2 Cor. v. 19. that the merciful and compassionate God who made us, was thus opening to us the way of salvation, I wish no other proof or testimony, than the testimony of Christ himself.

"Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself, but the Father who dwelleth in me, he doeth the works." John, xiv. 10.

If the wicked unbelieving Jews were ready to stone him, when he said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, before Abraham was, I am," John, viii. 58, we are not offended, we are able, through faith, (which is the gift of God,) to understand his testimony, and believe it—and the testimony of the apostle to the same effect, "In him, (that

"in Christ Jesus) dwelleth all the fulness of
"the Godhead bodily." Colos. ii. 9.

But when the man Christ Jesus was delivered into the hands of wicked men, crucified, and nailed to the cross, a separation again took place; for the great work was finished. The Almighty and Eternal God was never delivered into the hands of wicked men, or crucified by them; it was the man Christ Jesus. "And about the ninth hour, Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?'" Matt. xxvii. 46.

Of this appalling event, this act of wickedness and cruelty in the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus, the prophets were enabled to speak with great clearness many hundred years before it came to pass; and it has given rise to many notions, has become interwoven in many systems, all as foreign from the truth as they are inconsistent with reason, religion, and the Scriptures; and when "Certain Individuals," in the authority of truth, have separated the precious from the vile, broken some of these yokes, and let the oppressed go free;—when they have opened the eyes of the blind, placed the lame upon their feet, and taught people, according to the example of Jesus Christ, "to judge for themselves what is right," how la-

mentable is the disposition in others secretly to vilify, and to calumniate them behind their backs! Our anonymous author is an instance; and he has many partisans who are alarmed for their own popularity and pre-eminence in society; as their main support is the *ignorance* of the people, and their blind and implicit attachment to —they know not what!

I devoutly wish that our author, that thou, and I, and all men, were more singly attentive to the Light; to that "true Light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world:" John, i. 9— that we were more disposed to regard it, and follow it until the coming of the perfect day. Then indeed, and not until then, will our swords be beaten into plowshares, and our spears into pruning-hooks, which is the fulness of the Gospel dispensation, that breathes "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will towards men." Luke, xi. 14.

Taking leave of the author of the Exposition for the present, I cannot close this address without noticing particularly the young men in the Society of Friends. Keep out of all "fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying, which is in faith." 1 Tim. i. 4. "Avoid foolish and unlearned questions, knowing that they do gender strifes."

2 Tim. ii. 43. The principles of Friends stand in opposition to these, and he or they have gone from the alone safe standing in the unchangeable truth in themselves, who shall attempt to catechise or ensnare you. Keep in the cool, innocent, lamb-like, peaceable spirit; "study to be quiet, and to do your own business," Thes. iii. 2.; that is, be faithful. The principle of light and truth, which is, Christ within the hope of glory, will stand every test, will have its witnesses in every age, and will, finally, have the victory. So be it, amen!

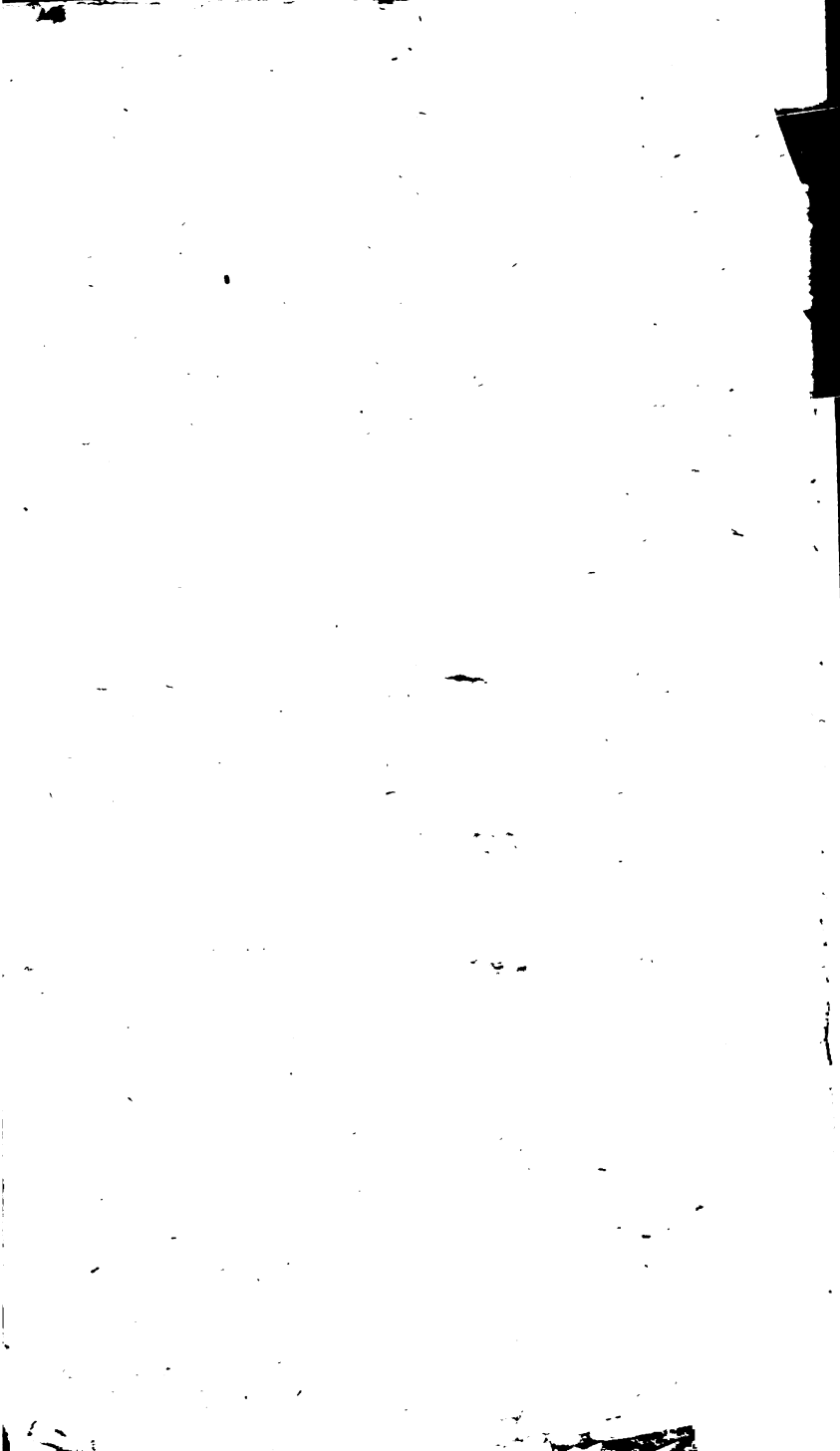
And when you witness heats, parties, human contrivance, and combinations of ambitious and designing men in society, "keep-out of them all." Retire, in the secret of your hearts, to the principle; be willing to suffer with it and for it, and you will see, in the Lord's time, that "He that leadeth into captivity, *shall go into captivity*; he that killeth with the sword, *must be killed with the sword*. Here is the patience and faith of the saints." Rey. xiii. 10.

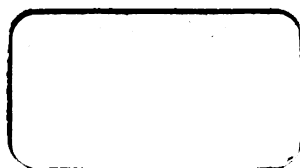
Dwell in the everlasting patience, where offences cannot reach you; and be not hasty in withdrawing from the Society in a time of trial and sore conflict, but rather with innocent boldness, be faithful in it. If you should be persecuted, and deprived of your rights through the influ-

ence and power of malicious men, care not for it : but hold fast the profession of your faith, without wavering ; for " what is the chaff to the " wheat, saith the Lord." Jer. xxiii. 21.

" Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be " of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace, " and the God of love and peace shall be with " you."

FINIS.





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A letter to a friend in New York ..

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